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Guide

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Evangelism and Christian Unity

A Staff Report

Baptism in Christ

Joseph V. Gallagher, C.S.P.

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IT SEEMS TO ME

No Easy Way

In an analysis of the problems of the Church in the Netherlands, Father Schillebeekx probes matters that increasingly agitate Catholics everywhere. He believes that the deepest problem is the relation of genuine religion to everyday life and to the whole human order, and that their long separation is one of the greatest evils of our day. Since "people are searching for an authentic and viable concept of God without which all human structures are empty," there is little reason for surprise that they seek "a new interpretation of the Church and of Christianity."

Reacting badly to this ongoing quest is the extreme conservative or reactionary. He grieves or growls over the passing of older forms of piety and what he regards as "irreligious" efforts to make religion relevant to man's daily concerns. Nor are matters helped by the extreme liberal, who is "restless," sometimes tinged with "charlatanism" and who exercises a "search for the very essence of religious life frequently all too haphazard."

The noted Dominican thinks matters will definitely get worse before they begin to improve. Yet he is convinced that the situation in the Netherlands is hopeful in that all these questions are discussed openly and honestly, in contrast with countries where acute religious problems seethe and fester under the surface. "Religion, certainly in the sense of the Church's creed," he predicts, "will be headed for a very difficult period these coming decades."

He looks forward with confidence, "although we shall not be able to improve conditions and find a solution without a great deal of meditation and study, especially not without a genuine Christian way of life." There will be many "conflicts of conscience" and "much suffering will have to be undergone." Nevertheless, the anguish of the coming years will be lessened if the "integralistic reactionaries" and "the wild charlatanism of some will be put to rest. Between these two extremes there is still sufficient room for serious, open-minded, honest but sincere theological dialogue which, thank God, is gradually getting under way in the Netherlands."

JOHN T. MCGINN, C.S.P.

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A Staff Report

Evangelism and Christian Unity

One of the critical areas for the ecumenical movement is the whole question of evangelism, "convert-making," and proselytism. This is seldom developed in dialogue but it is always in the background. We believe that it is an important subject for discussion, if only to discover the extent of the real problems. It is for this reason that the Paulist Institute for Religious Research recently sponsored a conference of pastoral clergy, both Catholic and Protestant, on this important point. The purpose of the dialogue was to uncover something of the actual state of the problem today. To this end, a group of persons actually engaged in evangelization was assembled to discuss their own experiences, practices, and adaptations. What they had to say is here summarized. The conference was held in Sparks, Md., May 3-5, 1966. Representative clergy, Protestant and Catholic, from all parts of the country attended.

The following is the summary of a recent dialogue among Catholic and Protestant clergy on the subject of Evangelism and Christian Unity. The particular aspect under which these subjects were discussed was the question whether Church policies and practices in evangelism conflict with the cause of Christian unity.

The first session was devoted to a general discussion of Church recruitment and recruiting methods. A primary concern here, as elsewhere, should be to further unity in every effort of the churches. "Cooperating in our separateness," is a good

way to describe the framework within which the conversation proceeded. It was agreed that true ecumenism and evangelism spill over into each other, but, it is also apparent that there are great difficulties and apathy on the part of many surrounding both of these concerns. However, there is a principle of development at work both in inter-church relations, and in individual attitudes toward other Christians. Contact with other Church groups is the best way to progress in ecumenical understanding. Many barriers to ecumenical activity can be overcome by such exposure, and there is great need for it because there are still basic obstacles of attitude between Protestants and Roman Catholics. Secular events, as much as anything else, seem to be the best catalysts for ecumenical activities.

There is a basic Protestant prejudice against Roman Catholics because of the "one true Church" stance of the latter. Hand in hand with this goes a feeling that Roman Catholics are also prejudiced against them. Some Protestants are brought up under the impression that Roman Catholics are not even Christians. Sometimes in the past, proselytizing of Roman Catholics by Protestants derived from the impression that Christ was not being preached in the Roman Catholic Church, and that it was a Protestant duty to evangelize the Romans. What has broken this prejudice down more than anything else are personal ties between members of the churches concerned.

The discussion included specific attitudes and practices of the various churches in evangelism. It was recognized that conflict occurs when a Church becomes more interested in advancing its own cause as a denomination instead of being a faithful witness to Christ.

RECRUITING PRACTICES

Specific recruiting methods were discussed. Census-taking and doorbell campaigns are quite harmless in themselves. Everything, however, depends upon the motive with which the Church concerned approaches its work. Today, most Protestant ministers who visit a Catholic home under such circumstances, will contact the Roman Catholic pastor and inform him of the presence of a family unknown to him. There is some feeling that this has not been a two-way street, — that when Roman Catholic parishes take census, in the past at least, they have not looked beyond their own. Co-operative census-taking on an ecumenical basis is a good tool and seems to work well where it is tried.

The reaction of staunch Church members to visits from a recruiter for another Church is a good test of true evangelism. Generally, such calls are taken calmly. However, tactics mean everything. Where the workers are trained not to proselytize, there is no difficulty. However, some groups are very aggressive and create resentment in a neighborhood. It has also been observed that most people do not mind having literature left in their homes during such calls, but again, motivation and tactics mean everything. Some people do resent this, but it seems that usually the resentment is not on religious grounds. Usually there are other psychological reasons involved.

Advertising campaigns for churches came up, and there was discussion about the use of the word "convert" to describe a Christian who moves from one Church to another. Recognizing that often this does not involve a genuine "conversion," people still seem willing to accept this term because it expresses a familiar fact. For most Protestants at least, the word seems to have two meanings. First, it means moving from non-belief to belief, but it is also accepted to describe the transfer from one Church mem-

bership to another. Catholics use it loosely to describe anyone who enters their Church, whatever the circumstances. Generally, Protestants are more respectful of the obligations of Roman Catholics than vice versa, and many ministers will not permit a Roman Catholic to worship in their churches without first consulting his own pastor.

The "Open House" was then discussed, and there was general agreement that in practice this has not created any serious problems. Its validity depends, again, upon motivation. Where the purpose is dialogue and understanding, there is no problem. But if a subtle attempt is made to manipulate the audience or to break down resistance, this is proselytism. The Protestants present thought that there is more proselytism between Protestant churches than elsewhere. It is not significantly large, but it does create problems wherever it is practiced. There is also a kind of passive proselytism practiced by some clergy who go out of their way to cultivate those whom they know to be at odds with their own pastors. All agreed that authentic evangelism is the work of the Holy Spirit, and that no human agency ought to distort it or stand in its way.

EVANGELISM FAILING?

The discussion closed with the observation that evangelism is generally failing in this country and that there are real problems of communication facing the churches. All deplored the fact that the churches haven't really communicated successfully what the Christian faith is. There are different forms of Christian witness, in different periods of history, and we probably haven't yet found the right forms for the present age. Evangelism takes place through person-to-person contact more than anything else, and while conversion to Christ is paramount, nevertheless it is very difficult for people to separate their Lord from the place where they find him. For this reason, Church membership will always be a significant element of faith and must be respected if a person is to preserve his Christian identity.

There was inconclusive discussion about the desirability of a moratorium on evangelism. However, in the light of the disappointing results of current evangelism this does not seem to be very realistic, and so long as the conscience of the individual is respected and the motives and tactics are truly Christian there should be no cause for conflict.

INSTRUCTION OF "CONVERTS"

The instruction of a person preparing to enter a Church furnished another point of discussion. The content of such instructions has generally improved today, and they are much more positive and less offensive in their treatment of other churches than was the case in the past. There is still some caricature in the treatment of the Reformation, but there is no longer much deliberate attempt to be unfair or misleading about other churches. There is no time for this today when all churches are finding the challenge of the world so pressing.

At base, the proclamation of the good news of Christ is more what you are than what you say. This applies also to the account every Church gives of itself. The word comes through the person. Jesus was the Word Incarnate, and the Church continues to reflect this truth today. Consequently, churches must show something of the love and concern of Christ for *all* his followers when they speak about other churches. With churches that recognize Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, it is relatively easy to present their strong points in positive fashion. However, it is also necessary to point out essential differences, and part of the trouble in treating other churches lies in the stereotypes each of us has about them. This could be solved by listening to authentic spokesmen for each Church instead of relying upon our own inherited images of them. The general return to Bible study by all the churches affords a good opportunity for instruction to be of the good type.

Even though instruction practices are more sympathetic today, nevertheless they are still carried on in a dogmatic framework. Protestants feel that the changes in the presentation of its teaching by the Roman Catholic Church are more in terms

of relationships with other Christians than in the core of the presentation. Infallibility and Mariology still remain big obstacles, and the doctrine on the Church still presents a huge problem. How do we explain the position of other Christians? The Roman Catholic Church poses the biggest problem here with its doctrine of the "one true Church." Protestants are in an easier position because it is possible for them to present the basic elements of the Christian faith without reference to a *particular* Church. Roman Catholics, however, must include the historic Roman Catholic Church as one of the basic elements of the Christian faith. Part of the Protestant problem is a reaction to this. The "one true Church" teaching of the Roman Catholics makes Protestants feel like second-class citizens and they respond defensively. There is a feeling that Protestant integrity is being denied, and as a result, Protestant identification is sometimes colored by this. While Protestants generally can present the Christian faith without getting into the position that Catholics do on the Church, there remains the necessity to give the catechumen a clear sense of his identity in the Christian family. So, the relationship of other churches to the instant Church must be presented on clear and realistic lines.

Real curricular improvements have been made by some of the churches so that the history and variety within Christianity is frankly recognized and faced. However, there will always be some tension between the twin principles of the universality of the Church and the historic identity of each particular Church. The ecumenical task is to keep these in reasonable equilibrium.

ENTERING ANOTHER CHURCH

Closely related to the instruction and preparation of a catechumen are the circumstances of his reception into a Church. These sometimes include "re-baptism" (to use the common expression) or conditional baptism. In this matter, many criticize Roman Catholics in America. Protestants generally do not "re-baptize." Sometimes new members are brought in through a confirmation ceremony. Unlike "re-baptism," this does not create a sacramental problem because of the Protestant under-

standing about confirmation. The practice of American Roman Catholics of administering conditional baptism so frequently is changing, and now there is a real effort in many places to verify a catechumen's baptism and receive him in a simple ceremony of profession of faith. A good deal of difficulty in the past is now recognized to have come from ignorance of each other's baptismal beliefs and practices. The ecumenical movement has done much to break down this barrier and time will probably see the end of the objectionable aspects of this practice.

PASTORS IN DIALOGUE

The possibilities of consultation and cooperation between pastors where a person is moving from one Church to another was discussed. A distinction was made between a "conversion" stemming from theological conviction and one coming from other reasons. Generally, where a person enters another Church through genuine theological conviction it is not the practice to consult with his former pastor, nor does such a course seem desirable. However, in non-theological transfers, because the reasons are pastoral, there is some consultation now, and it was agreed that there should be more. There is much more rapport between Protestants on this than between Protestants and Roman Catholics. Protestants feel that they do not get much cooperation from Roman Catholics when they ask for baptismal data, and for that reason find it better not to inquire. Generally, it was felt that more cooperation and consultation in these cases is desirable.

Closely related to such consultation is the matter of attitudes about a person moving from one Church to another. Again, it was recognized that Roman Catholics have a special problem here because of their "one true Church" doctrine. There is a tendency among them to make a doctrinal judgment about Catholics leaving their Church for another and then apply this judgment indiscriminately to individual Catholics who "leave the Church." The resulting general Catholic attitude is to view *all* such cases as apostasies. Protestants, on the other hand, are much more relaxed

about their people going to the Roman Catholic Church.

What should be the Christian attitude toward the reception of a person into another Church? The motives of the "convert" should settle this. We have to trust the Holy Spirit. If a person is being led by the Spirit to another Church, then all a Christian can do is accept his decision. Nor should we be quick to assume he is not being so led. A pastoral consultation with a person contemplating such a move is entirely in order so long as the pastor respects the integrity and freedom of the individual. Following the actual move of a person into another Church, the wisest policy thereafter seems to be to leave him alone. As for those persons who have no membership in any Church, then the only Christian reaction to their conversion is to rejoice that someone has been brought to Christ no matter who does the bringing. Almost certainly some "conversions" among the Churches will continue. They will not create conflict so long as they are not the product of proselytizing actions and the good faith and freedom of individuals are respected.

COMMON PROBLEMS IN EVANGELISM

All recognize that there is a much larger problem of evangelizing the world. Some people come to a Church because they are disenchanted with the practices of their own Church. Many Catholics come to Protestant churches because of birth control and marriage situations. However, there is another whole class of outsiders who might come to the Church. These people have different problems. They tend to see the Church as a limitation on man. They lack a supernatural sense and are dominated by the scientific mentality. Here is a real challenge to the best evangelizing efforts of all the churches.

There is a lot of evangelism needed within the churches as well. As Christians, we are always struggling to learn more of what we are preaching, and today there is discussion concerning acceptable forms of cooperation in evangelism to go out to meet others. There are understandable difficul-

ties relative to a joint program of instruction, but the possibilities of some kind of dialogue in instruction, at least in explaining other churches to catechumens, could be explored. Certainly, the cause of Christian unity will depend to a large extent on how much unity in mission can be achieved by the churches.

MIXED MARRIAGES

There was a whole session on mixed marriages. This is one of the basic problems for the ecumenical movement. The Roman Catholic position on mixed marriages causes many tensions. Protestant pastors know that Catholic marriage laws are leading many Roman Catholics into other churches. In some cases with careful counseling this could be avoided, but sometimes the priest's attitude contributes to the break. Another bad effect of mixed marriages is that the baptism of children is often postponed for many years because, despite the promises, no *real* agreement is reached. The Catholic requirement of the promises is considered basically unfair by Protestants. Fairness is a necessity in marriage, and it seems unfair to ask others to do something you are not willing to do yourself. Matters of conscience are often involved in the promises, and it is wrong to pressure a man into violating his conscience under any circumstances. Even with the relaxed obligation now imposed by the promises, Protestants still see it as a coercive act. The duty may now be indirect on the Protestant, but there is pressure on both parties as a couple, and their freedom needs to be respected. It is recognized that the Catholics have a real problem here because there is a theological basis to the requirements for the promise. Nonetheless Protestants do not recognize the present practice of the Roman Catholic Church as an acceptable solution to the theological problem.

There are also objections to the Catholic requirement for a Catholic ceremony. Again, even with the new legislation permitting a blessing by the Protestant pastor, this type of supplementary participation is not attractive to Protestants. The double ceremony is no solution either. In fact, this is worse because it implies that there is

something lacking in one of them. Many Protestant spouses want a double ceremony and see it as a solution, but Protestant ministers should not cooperate in this practice. Some participants felt that a happy solution would be some kind of ecumenical marriage service in which the Protestant pastor participates on an equal basis. Also, it would help if the marriage of a Catholic and a Protestant before a minister could be recognized as valid by the Roman Catholic Church.

Protestant pastors are not happy to receive Roman Catholics into their churches on the basis that this is the only place they can go. Some ministers will not marry Roman Catholics unless the latter first make a decisive choice and accept responsibility for leaving their own Church.

As for any proselytizing effect upon Protestants in mixed marriages, this appears to be minimal. Usually, the parties are sensible enough to realize that the success of marriage depends upon mutual respect and cooperation. Where there is "conversion" from one Church to another, it seems that marriage is the occasion but not the reason for joining the Church. Frequently the only efforts to "convert" come from the families of the parties. However, there is a proselytizing effect that involves the children of such a marriage in that the Roman Catholic legislation prevents the Protestant partner from communicating all of his convictions to his children.

AREAS FOR COOPERATION

Dialogue between Roman Catholics and Protestants on mixed marriages can help put the problem in a real life context and some pastoral efforts can then be undertaken in common. More pre-marriage programs would be a great help. Every effort should be made to counsel a mixed couple who are not yet engaged but who are going together. It would also be a great step forward if a combined marriage instruction by both the Catholic and the Protestant pastors could be worked out. This instruction should be as comprehensive as possible. It is helpful to explain the practices of each other's Church to the couple. There ought also to be some practical exercise of worship in

common by the parties to such a marriage and common devotional materials should be prepared for use in the home. Occasional participation by the Catholic in the Church services of the Protestant spouse would also help. The question was raised whether even occasional joint reception of the Eucharist would be good in mixed marriages to help bring about a deeper Christian unity between the parties.

It is time for the Christian churches to recognize that they have a common problem growing up with respect to marriage with non-Christians. Such marriages are becoming more and more common, and will prove to be a greater challenge and call for all of our cooperation. The real pastoral concern posed by the mixed marriage is the anguish and torture that people are often forced to live under because of Church legislation. As churches, we all ought to ask ourselves whether we are guilty of adding to people's burdens. Shouldn't our concern rather be: How can we help true Christians of different churches build a married life together?

There are signs of change, namely, the relaxed legislation of the Roman Catholic Church, and the evolution of a broader concept of marriage. Protestants are grateful to the Roman Catholic Church for the solidity of their stand on marriage. What they would like to do now is work out some common Christian approach that would benefit all concerned.

CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

As dialogue progresses, and the participants get to know one another it is possible to become more and more frank. One session of this dialogue was devoted to Catholics and Protestants telling each other exactly what they didn't like about each other. The results were not startling, as most of the traditional objections came in one way or another. But it was refreshing to have these things said face to face in a spirit of charity and out of a common Christian concern. Quantitatively, most of the objections were on the Protestant side. They included the Protestant objection about being considered second-class Christians in the face of the "one true Church" doctrine of Roman Catholics. Also, there is con-

siderable resentment among Protestant ministers over the Catholic attitude toward their Orders or ministerial status. Coupled with this is the reluctance by the Roman Catholic Church to recognize any Protestant claim to be Catholic. Protestants also object to Roman Catholic influence in political affairs, and the lack of interest so often shown by Roman Catholics in things that concern the community. Some of the practices of Roman Catholic parishes are considered to be grossly commercial. Such things as parish fiestas, bazaars, bingo, selling liquor without a license, gambling, etc., are thought to give considerable scandal. The relationship between clergy and laity in the Catholic Church was also criticized, with particular attention to the segregation that is practiced between them. Catholic policy on burial in Catholic cemeteries is also resented. The attitude of Catholic priests towards marriage problems is considered inadequate because of celibacy. The reluctance of Roman Catholics regarding inter-faith marriages, inter-communion, etc., was also criticized. Roman Catholic practices and teaching on indulgences, penance, purgatory, etc., is severely questioned, and the general Protestant belief is that this will never change.

ATTITUDES THAT DIVIDE

Some of the Catholic criticisms of the Protestants had to do with attitudes. Some Catholics have an impression that Protestants consider themselves the only true American religion, and that Catholics are foreigners. Other Catholics feel that the ordinary Protestant is not interested in doctrine, that some forms of Protestantism represent a religionless Christianity, particularly in the liberal Protestant theologies. Some Protestant groups are not seriously entering the dialogue, and Protestants have a great misunderstanding of Roman Catholic doctrine. The position of some Protestants on taxation of Church property and their idea of the parochial school as being undemocratic, is resented by Catholics. Catholics also resent being called authoritarian, autocratic and un-American.

The Protestants also had a few criti-

cisms of one another. There is a need for Protestants to recognize each other as churches, and there should be an end to the personality cult practiced by some Protestant ministers. Finally, there was a common criticism applicable to all Christian churches: we are much too complacent in the face of the emergence of non-Christian religions. We all tend to make of the clergy a privileged caste. Our money attitudes and our building practices, and the luxuries indulged in by the churches are inconsistent with our Christianity. There is great need for more concern about the world-wide mission of the Church. Clergy are critical of the people and their slowness to accept the clergy's suggestions. All Christians are too reluctant to get out of their churches and to meet people where they are and get involved in all of the vital issues that confront us.

TRUE EVANGELISM IN THE ECUMENICAL ERA

The final session dealt with true evangelism in an age of ecumenism. This was a freewheeling, all-embracing dialogue that looked to the future and its challenges to the Church. Some felt that boards of evangelism should be done away with. It is time to admit we don't know the answers. The churches should repent and forgive and stop trying to determine the shape and destiny of history. The Church should accept the fact that we are servants and that it is the Lord who adds to the Church. The work of the Church begins at the *end* of the Mass: "Go in peace." We don't realize enough where the work of the Church is. It is not in the gathered community, but rather it is in the world. Our preaching is ineffective. We need new forms and structures, and can learn a lot from the movies. The world speaks very effectively in them. We should

be slow to condemn. Though thought-provoking and even radical in expression, many of these suggestions were felt to have merit and to be necessary, while others were clarified or modified in discussion.

It was recognized that we have a difficult evangelizing problem with our own people. However, there is value in starting slowly with a few individuals. Right now we are only reaching the churched or the nominal Christians and not the rest. We are often talking in generalities and not confronting people personally with the claims of Christ. It was felt that the motive and concept of evangelism is changing as the concept of salvation is expanding from a narrow to a spacious one. The problems of worshiping together as a unity are made more difficult because of the decline of the family as a unity. Many recognized that the pre-evangelizing process is becoming the most important phase of the Church's mission.

CHRISTIAN WITNESS IN THE WORLD

A joint ecumenical effort to make contact with the world and present the Christian message is now becoming a possibility. One of the major tasks in such evangelizing is to help the laity bring their Christian faith into every situation. The world must see Christians out in the open away from church buildings if the world is to believe. God acts for the sake of the world, not merely for the sake of the Church, but he also acts through the Church, so every Christian must be a witness to Jesus Christ in everything he does. He must be open to the action of the Holy Spirit and willing to follow his lead. In a word, he must be free. It is only this kind of response that will enable the believer to be a Christian out there "where the action is."

Pre-Catechumenate Instructions

Baptism in Christ

Joseph V. Gallagher, C.S.P.

(THE TENTH INSTRUCTION IN OUR CURRENT SERIES)

In our study of the Christian religion we have found ourselves occupied with certain actions and events in the history of mankind. We have been looking at things God has done and things men have done. This is the way that God unfolded his plan before men. He didn't just preach at them but he taught them through a series of important events that changed their lives. We saw how he came into the lives of Abraham, Moses and the Israelite people, the Apostles and other followers of Jesus. He came into their lives and revealed a little bit about himself, held out a promise of something wonderfully good and then challenged them to do something. Over the period of the Bible—about 2000 years—God consistently acted in this way. The presence of the Church and its continuing activities is a sure sign that he is still present, active, and faithful to his promises.

GOD ACTS TODAY

From now on we will be studying the things that God is doing *now*, rather than concentrating on the things he has done in the past. However, they are closely related.

The history of salvation is still being written. The things that God is doing today are of a piece with the things he has done before. Every time he enters a person's life today and puts the challenge to him and gets a response, another chapter in the history of salvation is begun and God's plan advances that much further toward completion.

OUR RESPONSE TODAY

We become personally involved in the history of salvation when God enters our own personal life in a way that we can recognize and respond to. When he does that then his actions become part of our own personal history as well as important events in the history of mankind. The striking thing about this is how much of a resemblance there is between the way Christ approaches us and the way we see Yahweh approaching Abraham and the rest. Through his Church, Christ speaks to us in some way and shows something of himself to us. Then we learn of what he promises to give us and become aware that something is expected of us. At that point we are standing

the position of Abraham, — facing the unknown with some fear and uncertainty, yet fired with hope and expectation of a better life with God beyond our present existence. We respond positively, by faith.

Faith is the full acceptance of Jesus Christ and his invitation to us. Like Abraham, we say 'yes' to God and hold ourselves in readiness to do what he tells us. And the first thing we must do, as we know from Jesus, is to be baptized. The word 'Baptism' means to immerse in water. Christian baptism makes this washing an avenue to God.

► Reading from Jn. 3:1-8

Jesus tells us that baptism is a rebirth, — a rebirth in the Spirit. When we are born into this world we begin to live, and when we are baptized, we begin to live the life of God. Like the Apostles at Pentecost, we become the dwelling place of God and he comes to us and takes up residence in us and draws us into his own life. We are truly re-born, — this time as sons of God, sharing all that he has and is. Baptism is the first installment delivery of God's promised gifts.

*CHRIST
ACTS
IN BAPTISM*

Baptism is not so much something we do; rather, it is something Jesus does to us. Faith is the way a person gives himself over to Christ and becomes his disciple, and baptism is the action by which Christ takes a person into his life and makes him his own. For us, then, baptism is a key event in our own personal history of salvation. It is also an important event in the general history of man's salvation because it means that in the big picture things have moved ahead that much further.

Baptism is not only a re-birth and a new beginning. It is also a liberation. Yahweh not only led the Israelites into a land of their own and gave them a new start as his own people, but he also freed them from the slavery they knew in Egypt. He did this by leading them through the waters of the Red Sea to freedom. Christ does the same for us in baptism. He leads us into a new life with God liberating us from sin

and death. He leads us through water to do this. This is our own personal exodus.

Christ liberates a person from sin by joining him to himself in his own death and resurrection. These are the events by which he made his own personal journey to his Father. These same events are the way each of us is reconciled to God so completely that we live his life as if it was our own. Because of what Christ did and because we share in it through our union with him, God forgives all of our rebellion and selfishness. We are truly liberated from the stranglehold of sin.

Christ liberates us from death because he gives us his resurrection, too. We receive this now at baptism but don't experience it until later. Like Jesus, we must first go through death. When all have done so, then at the end of the world, all will rise from the dead as Christ did. Meanwhile we live his pilgrimage to the Father with him as we make the journey ourselves.

Christ leads us into the freedom and life of God. He opened up this to all men in his own death, resurrection and glory. The human race gets a new start in Christ. When we enter his life what he did must be done with him in us, too. He makes us a part of these great achievements when he baptizes us. Acting through his Church, he reaches out to us and draws us to himself and into his own exodus and passage from death to life.

► Reading from Rom. 6:3-11; Col. 2:12; Eph. 2:4-6

We have said many times that Jesus Christ is the Catholic religion. St. Paul shows us just how much he is. I am a Catholic by baptism, and this means that my life is now so closely tied to the life, death, resurrection and glory of Jesus, that I live these things with him; I die with him and I will be raised up and glorified with him, provided only that I never separate myself from him. He has given me a share in all that he did and baptism is the action in my life through which he did this. Is it any wonder that it is so important?

There are some other things that happen at baptism, too. Not only does Christ communicate his Spirit to me in such a way that I begin to live his life and am freed from my sins, but also I become part of

God's people. God's last covenant with men was made in Jesus Christ. When a person is baptized into Christ he comes also under the covenant. This means that he joins the people whom God has formed by his covenant. He becomes part of the Church. To live in union with Christ in this world is to live in the Church because that is where he is until his triumphal return at the end of time. None of us can live an isolated Christian life. There is no such thing because Jesus is open to all and when we come to him in faith we find a lot of others who have done the same thing. God lives in them as well as in us and his home is not in a restricted neighborhood.

POWERS OF THE CHRISTIAN

Jesus gives me some special powers, too, when he baptizes me. I need them in order to live the kind of life he does. He gives me the power to know, trust and love God and order my life in such a way that I will grow in all of these things. These powers come to me by the fact that the Holy Spirit, God himself, is present and active in me and acts through my own limited human powers in such a way that I am capable of things I could never do on my own.

Jesus makes me an active cooperator in his life and work. We will see more of this when we take up the subject of worship and the Mass. But just remember that a Catholic's part in worship begins with his baptism when Jesus takes him into the partnership of worship.

In the life of the Church, baptism is one of those actions that we call sacraments. The name is not important, it simply means a holy thing. There are a lot of holy things in the Church that serve as bridges to God. They are the contacts through which Christ communicates his life and Spirit to us. Seven of these are of special importance and are the sacraments of the Church. We will

consider each of them in turn. Their importance lies in the fact that they are the main ways in which Jesus comes into the lives of his people today and carries his plan for mankind forward. They are the current events of salvation history.

THE SACRAMENTAL WORLD

All of the sacraments have certain things in common. They are all actions of Christ. Acting through his Body the Church, he does something. All of them bring us his life and Spirit. They do this in different ways and for different purposes. All of them involve some public, physical action through which Jesus communicates his Spirit and life. In baptism, the action is one of pouring water and saying the words 'I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.' These words and actions while quite ordinary, contain hidden actions of Christ that are very powerful. Like the cures of Jesus, they indicate something much more far-reaching and lasting than the action itself. They are the ways in which God is rebuilding the world—helping man to become the true image and likeness of his Heavenly Father. It is truly a new creation because the sacraments bring new life to the Christian. We call this life 'grace'. The word 'grace' simply means a free gift. And what a gift! God gives himself and his life to us as our own. Thereafter we draw on His goodness to grow up to Christian maturity. It is not our own doing but God's. He spreads his life through ours wherever he finds a door open. He does this through the Sacraments and his other gifts. These others we call 'actual graces'—those promptings and consolations by which God helps us along. God enters into the life and actions of his people wherever doors are open to him for He is always working to make his people truly a people of God.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

How does God save men today?

What is the connection between baptism and the events of the Bible?

In what way is a person changed by baptism?

What persons are at work in baptism and what does each do?

What does it mean to be in the "state of grace"?

Why is there more than one sacrament?

What happens to the Church in every sacrament?

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Books Received

The Moral Teaching
of the New Testament
Rudolf Schnackenburg
Herder and Herder. \$7.50

Those who endorse the view of Christian morality advocated by men like Harig, Gillemann and the new school will delight in this full dress exposition of New Testament morality by a noted exegete.

The work falls into three sections: The moral demands of Christ; the general teaching of the early Church on morality; and the application of this doctrine to particular circumstances. The author treats the topic extensively (the book runs to 388 pages) from the aspect of salvation history. He contends that "the real ground of moral obligation is the perceptible saving action of God in Jesus' coming and activity," with its universal demand for inescapable response in repentance and belief.

The exegetical treatment of the Sermon on the Mount and the Great Commandment of love are superbly done. And if neatly packaged answers to problems of our own day are not spelled out, this is because the book sees things in the perspective of Christ and his time. The writer can only reflect the revolutionary demands of Christ and the Christian motives for following them.

In the section on the moral teaching of the early Church, the eschatological perspective is, if anything, even more prominent. In living out the implication of Jesus' teachings in new situations, the early Church first interpreted and then adapted Christ's message. This is well illustrated in the way they faced issues like poverty and slavery, fasting, virginity and marriage.

In the third section, the author ably discusses the light thrown on Christian morality by Paul, James, John and the others. And throughout his entire treatment is the writer's conviction, "No Christian can escape responsibility for the course of history, for the future of the Church, for the salvation of the nations. In his age, in

his historically conditioned existence, summoned by the events of history, he has to fulfill the tasks which God has set that age, and him as a child of that age."

The Book of Catholic Worship
The Liturgical Conference
Washington, D.C. \$3.50

It is understandable that the extensive changes in the worship of Catholics introduced by liturgical reform should cause confusion and even dismay among the faithful. The liturgy needed to be renewed and there is no painless way to improvement. But the journey towards new ways can be made less irksome if good texts for parish use are made available.

The Book of Catholic Worship is an ambitious attempt to help any congregation to meet their needs when they are at worship. It is divided into five parts: the Mass; the Hymnal (containing more than 100 hymns and antiphons); the whole of the Psalter; the Sacraments celebrated in the parish; and a variety of Services and Prayers for parish use. The book runs to 807 pages, is the result of the combined efforts of noted experts, and is beautifully printed and arranged.

The approval of the use of the vernacular and the need for the intelligent participation of the congregation has presented pastors with an opportunity and a challenge and alert pastors are meeting the situation in various ways. A growing selection of books, booklets, leaflets and cards are giving serviceable aid.

But *The Book of Catholic Worship* is perhaps the most comprehensive effort to supply for this urgent need. It may not be the last word, but it probably will be one of the leaders in the field for some years to come. Pastors will appreciate its many excellencies and can adapt some of its content to local needs. (Where parishes wish to experiment, the book sells for \$2.50 a copy over 1,000).

The Mystery of Death
Ladislaus Boros, S.J.
Herder and Herder. \$4.50

"Death is man's first completely personal act, and is, therefore, by reason of its very being, the center above all others for the awakening of consciousness, for freedom, for encounter with God, for the final decision about one's eternal destiny." In this definition, we see something of the richness of the author's speculation on the mystery of death and its direct bearing on the entire life of man.

Father Boros has reflected deeply on the many influences which make death an especially profound problem for modern man. The daily news, literature, and a rethinking of philosophy and theology have all gone into this contemplation. The result is a refreshing meditation on the topic which adds up to a significant contribution to a renewed vision of what Christian life entails. The author's conclusions follow from a deep study of the personalist and cosmic outlook and a development of the insights of men like Rahner and Teilhard de Chardin.

The general reader will be particularly interested in the writer's views on the nature of the salvation accomplished in Christ, and a deeper appreciation of the last things. One could wish that parochial missions and retreats might convey these insights to an ever-widening circle of the faithful.

Learning to Worship
Theodore Filthaut
Newman. \$3.95

Most people realize that they need a certain education in the essential elements of worship before the current liturgical changes can become personally meaningful. The writer in clear, understandable language undertakes to get at these basic components. He begins with illuminating chapters on "History's Answer to Liturgical Questions" and "What is Liturgical Education?" These are followed by a brief, suggestive treatment of: "The Essence of Liturgy," "The Purpose of Liturgy," "A Way of Living," "A Meeting of God and Man," and "The Place of Liturgy in Our World."

Parables and Instructions
in the Gospels
Heinrich Kahlefeld
Herder and Herder. \$3.95

Understanding the parables has always been regarded as highly important for a true understanding of the New Testament. The liturgy reflects this in the number of parables employed by the Church in the Sunday Gospels. Until late in the last century, the parables were interpreted mainly as allegories. Scholars then moved towards a stress on the precise situation in Christ's life and ministry for their significance.

This slim volume is in the newer exegetical tradition. It is a translation of the first volume of the author's two-volume work in German. Following judiciously the methods of Jeremias and Dodd, the writer gives an excellent treatment of the parables. Preachers, catechists and the general reader can read him with considerable profit.

J.T.M.

GUIDE

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GUIDE

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Guide Lights

REPORT ON A PILOT CATECHUMENATE . . .

It is now just a year since the first of the so-called "pre-Catechumenate" instructions appeared in this magazine. At that time I mentioned that these had been prepared in connection with a pilot catechumenate in the diocese of Richmond. This project began about the end of September, 1965 and all of the parishes finished up by Easter. About a half dozen parishes completed the program and another half dozen were involved one way or another in the planning and training phases. Recently, a wrap-up session was held and the parishes involved gave reports and their evaluation of the whole program. Many things were learned in this experiment and, in the belief that they will be of help to others, the main lessons are here summarized.

CONTENT OF THE INSTRUCTIONS . . .

Generally, the material of the lessons was found to be effective. Catholics in the classes found it a refreshing change and those of Protestant background were encouraged by the strong Scriptural orientation. However, the Scripture readings proved too numerous for the time available, and these had to be cut down in many cases. Also, because of the meager biblical background of most people today, prolonged reading of Scripture passages does not govern. It is better to shorten the readings and exercise careful selection.

There is still need for apologetical material in many individual cases and this will probably always be true. However, there doesn't seem to be any drawback in covering this material in private sessions with those who have apologetical problems. This was the principle followed when these lessons were drawn up and it seems to work out all right. Suffice it to say that the instructor should be alert to this need among

the catechumens and be ready to deal with such questions as the existence of God, immortality, etc., as they arise.

The material on morality, sin, and confession was found by some to be rather sketchy and to leave many questions unanswered. This is true. However, there are some built-in problems here that do not seem to have satisfactory answers at the present time. Perhaps it is as well today to prepare adults for life in the Church by giving them a basic framework of moral principles and an understanding about education of conscience. This in the long run may be the most valuable preparation of all.

Finally, a demonstration of the Mass is still one of the most popular lessons and is well worth including in the program.

IMPORTANCE OF DISCUSSION . . .

The use of group discussion as an integral element of learning was one of the keys to the success of this project. Without exception, the parishes that had good discussion had good results. It was a common experience to find groups deep in discussion an hour or more after a session ended. The discussion leaders were enthusiastic and, in some instances, the practice was also incorporated into the instruction part with plenty of give and take between the priest-instructor and the audience. There were some minor flaws. The discussions did not always flow from the material, and, in some cases, the suggested questions were too remote and the people had difficulty relating them to the subject matter. It was found that the smaller the groups were, the better the discussion. The key to the whole thing was the lay people who led the discussion. Where they were good, the group came to life. Where they were not clear about their role,—where they dominated or dogmatized, then discussion dragged.

LAY PARTICIPATION . . .

This, too, was a key element in the success of the program. The sense of reli-

gious community that was fostered by the inclusion of lay people, along with the use of liturgical action, created an atmosphere of the Church that cannot be duplicated in the lecture setting. When the program was over, the people who actually came into the Church seemed to be comfortable in their faith. They had discussed religion at a basic level with other lay people and had come to a good sense of identity in the Church. They were not so dependent on "Father" as is often the case at the end of an inquiry class. In one parish, the three priests there took turns conducting the session, and this also had the effect of lessening dependence upon the priest-instructor. One priest commented that he was going to send all his private instructees into the program in the Fall just for the experience of community.

Where lay participation was active, there was a good relationship between the catechists and the inquirers that has lasted beyond the program right down to the present. In some parishes during the catechumenate phase, i.e., the actual preparation for baptism, the lay catechists gave all the instructions and did very well. Perhaps this kind of broad lay participation will take care of the follow-up problem that has always plagued the old inquiry class. The possibilities here are only beginning to appear, and of all the facets of the program, the role of the laity seems to offer the most promise for development.

RECRUITING METHODS . . .

The parishes publicized their program in various ways. Some merely announced it in their bulletins and got a fair response. One parish canvassed all the mixed marriages by letter and got an excellent response. Many who did not come to the sessions called up or wrote in expressing their appreciation at the interest taken in them and thanked the pastor for his concern. However, other parishes deliberately avoided this kind of approach so as to safeguard the conscience and sensibilities of Protestant spouses. One parish arranged an interdenominational census and all the participating churches agreed that anyone who identified himself as a church member would not be invited to participate in a catechumenate. All in all, more thought seems necessary in this whole matter of recruiting.

USE OF THE BAPTISMAL LITURGY . . .

Most of the parishes in the program used a form of baptismal liturgy in stages. However, there was a lot of variation in the combinations and content of the stages.

Most felt that the exorcism liturgy is bad so this was usually combined with another step in order to mitigate the effect it produces on many people. There was a general feeling that much of the baptismal liturgy is meaningless to people. For example, the ceremony of handing over the symbols of the Church,—New Testament, Creed, etc.—meant very little to those of Protestant background as they felt that these belonged to them already. It might be good for pagans but it doesn't seem to signify a step forward to others. The Old Testament Scripture readings in the catechumenate do not have much effect, and these passages along with the psalm-responses were cut mercilessly. The Gospels and Epistles do not pose the same problem, and generally the response to the reading of them was pretty good. Congregational singing was poor and for the most part was not attempted.

The place where liturgy is held is important. Some thought it should all be held in church, but where the church is large and the group small, the effect can be dismal. The ideal seems to be a chapel setting. Some attempt at having the parish participate is desirable and some of the parishes plan to use the catechumenate as the parish Lenten devotion next year.

THE FINAL STAGE . . .

Most of the parishes had the final stage of baptism during the Easter vigil. However, one interesting variation was in the case of a family, all of whom had been validly baptized. They were received by simple profession of faith privately on Holy Thursday. They then made their first communion under both species, before the whole congregation during the Mass on Holy Thursday. Another parish took the last Mass on Sunday as the occasion for a group first communion. The effect of both of these rites was profound, not only upon the communicants but also upon the large section of the parish that witnessed them. Some imaginative planning along these lines in the liturgies of baptism, first communion and confirmation would almost certainly produce excellent results. In a couple of cases where the preparation had to be done in private, the baptism in stages was nevertheless followed and the effect on both the catechumen and his family was gratifying.

SOME PROBLEMS . . .

One of the difficulties encountered with the program was what to do at the beginning of the catechumenate with people who do not intend to come into the Church.

They feel left out when they see the others with whom they shared the pre-catechumenate experience go on to the preparation phase. A clear explanation of everything in the program at the outset is a help. This should be repeated several times as the pre-catechumenate advances so that the separation that follows seems quite natural and expected. However, apparently, there is still some sense of loss and disappointment when the break occurs and perhaps this cannot be avoided.

Another problem was a parish that had very large numbers of inquirers. They have been conducting three inquiry classes a year to take care of over 200 people and the time element does not allow for a full catechumenate program as it was used by the other parishes. It was suggested that the pre-catechumenate might be given twice a week and some of the liturgy steps combined so as to use as much of the program as possible. Obviously, where so many are involved something must be cut and the maturation process that is so important in the catechumenate will probably suffer.

OVER-ALL IMPRESSION . . .

It is difficult to make any sweeping judgment about this particular catechumenate program in the light of a single year's experience. However, the concentration on salvation history, the use of liturgy, and strong lay participation do seem to give new vitality and appeal to catechesis. There is need for a great deal of improvement and, indeed, for entirely new departures. That these would be worth developing is indicated by two little items of significant interest; viz, in one parish there were five people in the program who had taken a course of instruction before, some of them as many as seven or eight times. All five of these people came into the Church at the end of the program. The other incident was the case of a nominal Lutheran who had been through instruction before. This time, he excitedly discovered during the session that, in his words, "it all came alive." To me, this is reason enough to follow through.

JOSEPH V. GALLAGHER, C.S.P.

GENUINE RENEWAL

Just to stagger around in a newly won openness and freedom can blind us to the fact that Christianity—and consequently the Church—is in the throes of a grave crisis which mere openness will not, of itself, help us to surmount. It can only lead to a wild and irresponsible hunt after novelty for its own sake, to a loose experimentation and an attitude of intolerance towards those who are more conservatively inclined.

What is needed is the effort to think and act in a responsible, fresh and profoundly creative way. We must in all conscience try to discover an authentically religious inspiration, at the same time looking out for the forms in which this inspiration might be cast.

Nothing would be more disastrous for a genuine, evolutive renewal of the Church and of Christianity than an attitude rooted in the conviction that, of course, we know already in which direction the Spirit is taking us. I, for one, make no claim to such knowledge; but I am ready to seek and to knock, and so to persist in the hope that he who seeks will find, and to him that knocks it shall be opened.

"The Church is Different"
Robert Adolfs

Certificate of ^{SEP 6 1968} Profession of Faith



This is to Certify

That _____

Child of _____

and _____

Born in _____

on the _____ day of _____ 19____

Baptized in the _____ Church

of _____

on the _____ day of _____ 19____

***made a Solemn Profession of Faith in the
Roman Catholic Church***

on the _____ day of _____ 19____

at the Church of _____

in the presence of Rev. _____

and _____

and _____

***and was admitted to the Sacraments and Communion
of the Roman Catholic Church.***

(Seal)

Dated: _____

Signed: _____